Singapore's Malay Ties Weakening

Post 9/17/65

Reuters

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaya, Sept. 16 — Relations between Malaysia and newly independent Singapore appeared to worsen tonight following an attack on the Malaysian government by Singapore Premier Lee Kuan Yen and a strong protest by Malaysia.

Singapore — which has pledged to cooperate with Western-aligned Malaysia in defense and foreign affairs—also served notice that it intends to pursue an independent course on the international scene.

Malaysian authorities objected to an interview Lee reportedly gave to Chinese-language newspapers in which Lee accused Malaysian officials of corruption. The interview was recorded for showing of Singapore television.

[The New York Times quoted Lee as also saying: "I am telling the Tunku (Malaysian premier) that if he ever tries to bring the Americans into Malaysia I am going to reconsider my whole position. I would certainly consider offering Singapore as a base to the Russians, and I believe they would take it."]

Lee expressed a fear that, if American troops were sent to Malaysia, they would side with Malays against ethnic Chinese.

Mr. Lee's Bug

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It is now possible to guess what is worrying Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, who has renewed his gratuitous criticisms of the United States. He wants to forestall any thought in Britain of relinquishing the military base in Singapore, and he evidently hopes that his verbal shots aimed at Washington will ricochet to strike the Defense Ministry in London. Diplomatic billiards, it might be called.

There is no indication that Britain is contemplating giving up the base, but Mr. Lee seemingly is concerned about the defense review still under way. His suggestion that he would turn to the Soviet Union rather than see the base come into American hands is of course fantastic. No one has suggested that the United States should or would take over from Britain; indeed, the Administration attaches the highest importance to continued British fulfillment of commitments east of Suez.

It is not an unknown sport for politicians elsewhere to take potshots at the United States in order to strengthen their domestic positions, and if Mr. Lee feels that he can demonstrate his independence in this fashion, he is welcome to do so. All the same, he had better be aware that sooner or later people here are going to begin taking what he says at face value.

CBS. TV NEWS 7/16/68, 7 pm WTOP
had interview in which Lee spelled
out reasons for mis-trust U.S.:
his respect for Mao (have his
long range objectives not been
achieved until well after Mao's
death, emphasizing Mao's plans
have not gone); changing
sentiment & diplomatic humiliations
TVUS, lack of understand of
what is going on world, etc.